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Radio & TV

by Joan Irwin

Success knows no borders for Quebec's current superstars

Montreal almost missed half of bilingual phone-in

The bilingual coast-to-coast open line show organized by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) takes place this Saturday, but until yesterday no English language station in Montreal planned to carry it.

"Dialogue Canada" — a debate on national unity — will, however, be heard on CFCF and CFQX Saturday from noon to 5 p.m., which is a little peculiar since neither is a CAB member. But the association, which represents many of Canada's privately owned radio and TV stations, has given CFCF and CFQX permission to carry the program because the CAB's English language member stations in Montreal turned down the opportunity.

As for the English CAB members here, CJAD's Bill Hamnby doesn't like the fact that there will be no anglophone Montreal representation among the hosts of "Dialogue Canada." He fears the show will be controlled by such outspoken westerners as Vancouver's Jack Webster and Winnipeg's Peter Warren. AD's sister station CFRB Toronto won't carry the show either, nor will Geoff Stirling's CKGM and CHOM or his stations in Newfoundland and Windsor, Ont., all CAB members.

Of the 214 stations across the country who will join the informal network, 40 are French-language stations in Quebec, including CKAC. CJMS and CFMB in Montreal. The program will be broadcast simultaneously in English and French from its origination point in Winnipeg where three interpreters, providing translation when needed, will be in the studio with bilingual moderator Conrad Lavigne and five regional hosts.

There will be different phone numbers for callers in each region, and executive producer Taylor Partnaby of CKEY Toronto hopes to achieve a reasonable balance geographically as well as "proportional representation of both sides of the dialogue."

It's going to be quite a feat for callers to get a word in, given the stiff competition of the five regional hosts who are aggressively articulate and anything but bashful about expressing opinions. In addition to Webster and Warren they are Solange Chaput Rolland of Montreal, John Gilbert of CHUM Toronto, and Norris Nathanson of Sydney, Nova Scotia.

"I think we're going to find some interesting tensions and diversities in their viewpoints," says Partnaby. "Several of the hosts do shows like this every day, and in the past months they've been dealing at length with the current state of Confederation. This time they'll be hearing the opinions of people outside their own regions, and it ought to be very instructive for them and for the audience."

"Dialogue Canada" was originally scheduled for broadcast Tuesday, April 19 as the climax of the CAB annual convention in Winnipeg. But the telephone companies couldn't handle the extra load on the long distance circuits during a weekday, so the show was switched to Saturday when long distance calls are at a minimum.

The hookup of French and English language stations across the country is an important event in Canadian broadcasting and an impressive undertaking on the part of the private sector of the broadcast community.

If it's successful, and there's no reason to suppose otherwise, we may well see further experiments in bilingual national broadcasting. And we might also expect the CBC to join its French and English radio networks in similar programming, perhaps on the Sunday 5 to 7 p.m. period where the national open line show 'Cross Country Checkup' is already heard weekly on the English network.

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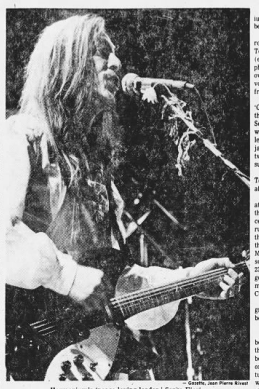
The edition of CFCF-TV's new current affairs series 'The Editors' which was pre-empted last Sunday will be seen at 7:30 p.m. tonight.

At 8 p.m. CFCF-TV telecasts the first episode of a four-hour, two-part drama 'The Amazing Howard Hughes,' based on the book 'Howard the Amazing Mr. Hughes' by the reclusive millionaire's longtime associate Noah Dietrich. Part 1 begins on CBS tonight at 8 p.m., and Part 2 will be seen on both networks tomorrow night beginning at 9 p.m.

At 8 p.m. tonight NBC offers a nature special 'Wonderful Kangaroo' by Des and Jen Bartlett, who won an Emmy several years ago for 'The Incredible Flight of the Snow Geese'.

Tomorrow night at 8 p.m. 'NBC Reports' on a day in the life of U.S. President Jimmy Carter. At 9 p.m. on CBS and CFCF-TV it's Part 2 of the Hughes drama, and on CBC-TV the national ACTRA Awards show live from Toronto with hosts Pierre Berton, Barbara Frum and Gordon Pinsent. At 9:30 p.m. the CBC French TV network begins 'Terre et Moissons' — 13-part study of the evolution of agriculture in developing countries.



— Gazette, Jean Pierre Kisser

Harmonium's 'peace-loving leader,' Serge Fiori

The phenomenal success of Harmonium within Quebec has begun to spread beyond its borders.

The current superstars of Quebec rock recently performed a concert in Toronto, where an audience of 2,000 (estimated to be 80 per cent anglophone) accorded the septet a standing ovation. Many were heard leaving Convocation Hall singing French phrases from the group's songs.

Said critic Paul McGrath in the 'Globe and Mail': "As well as watching the language problems dissolve under Serge Fiori's peace-loving leadership, I was witness to the disintegration of at least three musical categories. Rock, jazz and folk: all of them melded into two hours of exquisite music from this supremely talented group."

Harmonium intends to return to Toronto — this time at Massey Hall — after a May tour of Quebec arenas.

While its double-disc 'l'Heptade' has attained gold sales status in Canada, the group's attendance figures for concerts have been staggering. A recent run at Cinema Outremont drew more than 13,000 people, while two shows at the Centre Sportif of the Universite de Montreal on May 21 and 22 are now sold out, a third performance, on May 23, has been added but tickets are going fast. In addition, the group drew more 9,000 fans to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa recently.

Harmonium is obviously a Quebecois group with a strong future outside la belle province.

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A new local rock publication, 'Quebec Rock,' has made an appearance this month. The first 24-page issue is being distributed free of charge in record stores throughout the city. Featured are articles on and interviews with Offenbach, Cano, George Thurston of Beale Noire, Michel Pagliaro, Lou-gurou, Le Temps and Harmonium, and record reviews of Diane Dufresne, Lavender Hill Mob and Pagliaro.

'Quebec Rock' promises to be a compact compendium of latest happenings on the local rock scene; the magazine, which also features a lot of advertising by many of the artistes covered in articles, is a welcome addition to the Quebecois music marketplace.

The magazine's editor is Jacques 'Coco' Letendre, former disc jokey of CKOI-FM, who began his career in Quebecois music journalism more than 15 years ago writing for the "vendettes" pulp tabloids. Initial circulation is 40,000.

Quebec-Rock follows the lead of another free magazine, the Outremont Cinema's listings of films and shows. The 18th issue of 'Outremont,' with 44 pages, eight in color, was recently issued. Circulation is now up to 160,000 (in record shops, bookshops and film meeting places) and, according to publisher Roland Smith of Cinema Outremont, it actually turns a profit.

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James Brown returns to Montreal, after an absence of three years, with a five-night engagement at the Limelight Discotheque. This marks the first time in more than a dozen years in which Soul Brother No. One will be seen in a club setting locally. The May 16 appearance is part of the "world-premiere" of his disco-club tour.

Spotlight

by Juan Rodriguez

Veronique Sanson

Romantic talent at last blooms

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ of The Gazette

Veronique Sanson has for several years been recognized by local audiences as one of the genuinely romantic figures of the contemporary rock scene but, until this week, she had not done justice here to her talents.

Sanson walks a tight-rope on stage. She interprets her songs as she wrote them, and this has resulted in lost, out-of-control or timid performances in the past. Last night was remarkably different.

She is still not a comfortable stage artist; she conveys more of a sense of self than of performer. She is diffidently true to herself, as when she answered a call from the rafters for "une nouvelle" (a new song) by saying that she doesn't think those terms and then adding, "Bon, une vieille!" (Okay, an old one).

This time, however, Sanson does not bury herself in the indulgences that plagued her past shows here. She gave a show that lent strong foundations to the naked feelings so starkly and beautifully expressed in her songs.

When she sang 'Faire Mal' — which she did drunkenly at Place des Arts two years ago — she held her head up and affirmed her sense of self-preservation, having survived an unsatisfactory relationship with her former husband.

Sanson builds upon tight rhythms and tempi, projecting melodies that soar. She's got a strong voice, with a bath-ery vibrato at times, and she interprets her songs with passionate spontaneity.

Her new band is made up of seven session musicians from Los Angeles and these were her first shows with them. They performed with a spirit parallel to hers, unafraid to back her up with their own interpretations of her music. The results were spectacular — at times a bit rough and clamorous — and these debut shows augur well for a world tour which starts in Paris later this week.

An added feature of the Outremont shows was the appearance of local star Gilles Valiquette, who introduced a pleasant new song, 'Chez nous c'est chez vous', in which Sanson sang back-up harmonies.

CANADIAN FILM AGENCY GETS TOUGH

TORONTO — (CP) — The federal government is getting tougher about letting foreign producers dominate movie co-productions that give domestic investors a tax break.

The Canadian Film Development Corp. will no longer invest in movies which get around Canadian content rules by using expatriate Canadians, Michael Spencer, the corporation's executive director, said in a recent interview.

"We're only going to invest in co-productions when either the main star or director or writer is a resident of Canada," he said.

John Roberts, secretary of state, said recently: "The permanent expatriate is not to be treasured more than a foreigner."

The corporation has lost 86 per cent of the $25 million it invested since 1968 on "Canadian" movies, and last year it invested in four co-productions that would not clear the rules this year.

The corporation relaxes the official co-productions. Upset at the relatively small Canadian content in the 11 movies made so far under treaties with England, Italy and France, it wants these clauses added to the agreements, Spencer said.

"The (foreign) producer should do everything in his power to include the maximum Canadian personnel in such co-production."

Ballet suffers in symphony setting

By JACOB SISKIND of The Gazette

The Montreal Symphony decided years ago to spruce up its Gala Series of concerts by adding events of variety. One of the bright ideas at the time was to have a pair of ballet dancers appear on stage with the orchestra, to add a bit of color.

Last night subscribers were treated to another of these programs, and the idea seems even less attractive now than it did at first.

Franz-Paul Decker was on the podium and he did choose music that was inspired by the dance. There was the Hindemith 'Nobilissima Visione Suite' from the ballet 'St. Francis,' which opened with evening, and there was the familiar 'Suite of Waltzes' from Richard Strauss 'Der Rosenkavalier' (with the 'Presentation of the Silver Rose Scene' added to flesh out the suite).

Decker also chose the famous 'Dance of the Seven Veils' from Strauss' 'Salome' as a filler to complete the musical portion of the evening.

The dancers, Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn of the National Ballet of Toronto, performed in two excerpts from larger works, one really quite kitschy and the other the famous 'Bluebird Pas de Deux' from Tschaikowsky's 'Sleeping Beauty'.

The two dance items were out of place in any concert and were not enhanced by the use of the postage-stamp-sized stage that ruined from the small pit floor of the Salle Wilfrid Pelletier for the occasion.

The management could quite easily have raised the full pit without displacing too many patrons and have given the dancers a little more room to breathe and move.

The young team presented itself with considerable aplomb and whatever hesitations or rough edges there were to their performances were easily explained by the cramped quarters in which they had to work.

But there is no musical or balletic excuse for offering Heitold's 'Flower Festival in Genzano' — not even the unlikely pairing of Pavlova and Mosjukin could have made that interesting.

As for the musical part of the evening — it came off with considerable distinction.

The 'Hindemith Suite' is one of the composer's more readily accessible works and there are a number of moments in which he actually allowed himself to write some real tunes. Decker made the work sound a great deal more free and expansive than is usually the case and the result was a reading that made the music positively glow.

As for the 'Dance of the Seven Veils,' Decker managed to make that music sound much less vulgar and obvious than it usually does and he drew attention to the fine playing of the solo oboe and flute, without overplaying their contributions.

There was a brief moment in the Rosenkavalier Suite' when the woodwind section parted company from the strings, but it was a temporary aberration and quickly resolved. Decker got some fine playing from the orchestra in both Strauss works and it was a pleasure to hear him get the orchestra to dig its teeth into the music.

If the Montreal Symphony insists on having another of these mish-mash programs next year, it might consider the possibility of either getting the soloists to do something a little less frivolous or, failing that, simply drop a scrim between the dancers and the orchestra during the solos, to remind concert patrons that that part of the performance has no musical pretentions.

KAREN KAIN
No room to breathe

A new rock generation reopens landmark club

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ of The Gazette

It was almost like old times last night at the opening of the Mildred club, formerly the Esquire Show Bar. The Stanley Street spot was jammed, reminiscent of the nights from the 1940s to the early 1970s when it was the showcase for the top contemporary club talents.

There was a difference last night, however, in that the opening-night guests represented the new rock music generation of Quebec. Many of the notables from the local rock scene were there to greet Offenbach, the province's heaviest, loudest group.

Also on hand was the top brass of A&M Records of Canada, which has just taken Offenbach's first English album to Los Angeles and visited Mildred to kick off a new French disc.

Since Offenbach is the oldest continuing rock band in Quebec, together over six years, it was fitting the quartet should open the new-old club.

The club remains virtually unchanged from the Esquire era, complete with beams disguised as stylized white palm trees, and a new paint job from the club's use three years back in the film 'The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz.' The club's intimacy derives from its nitty-gritty funky atmosphere, no matter where one sits, a good view of the stage is guaranteed.

There will be no problems hearing the sounds either, at least if Offenbach has its way.

Each member of Offenbach contributes a strong arm, starting from Gerry Boulet's leathery vocals and churning organ playing. Guitarist Jean Gravel doesn't care about being flashy but just plays all-out gut solos. The rhythm section, made up of bassist Michel Lamothe (son of country 'n western star Willie Lamothe) and drummer Roger Barbeau, literally cements the group's rhythmic foundations.

Offenbach is a pounding band. Most of their songs come from the same genre. Nevertheless, the group conveys a surprising degree of nuance to its bludgeoning sound. It is as tight as it is loud.

Poudriere's 'Wife' gives comedy a hand

By JULIA MASKOULIS of The Gazette

La Poudriere opened its 20th season yesterday with a comedy written excruciatingly for the small St. Helen's Island theatre. But it's not the first time that the delightful A Wife In the Hand has been performed there.

Jack Crisp wrote the play in 1968 with a specific cast in mind at La Poudriere. That year the play was performed at the International Theatre of Hemisfair '68 in Texas to which La Poudriere was invited. Later it played twice at Poudriere, once in German translation.

The play is quite ordinary fare but not less enjoyable for it. A company president is caught looking as if he is cheating on his wife, when he is not while he is trying to impress a magazine writer who is writing an article on him.

Crisp's strong script, and his able direction in this production make it effervescent and the humor is delivered straight from the hip.

The play is pure entertainment, often predictable but the well delivered performances from the cast, some of whom played in the original are solid and outrageously funny.

Len Watt as the executive past his prime trying to impress the writer created a wonderful comic tension with Barrie Baldaro's portrayal of the aging bachelor-writer.

Valerie Scott as the flighty, flirtatous airline stewardess — the hostess with the mostest — makes fun n games out of an inexplicable marital mix-up. Jeannine Duque, Una Kay and Jeannie Beaubien (as the executive's wife) provided solid comic ambiance. John Peters as a bustling nephew was also effective.

Guy Beauregard's set was appropriate while Richard Bonn's lighting design worked well when it was not erratic.

Although it gets off on a slow start, the play's strong second act pulls it together quite well and it glides to a smooth ending. On until May 14.

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